



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

Public Health Service

National Institutes of Health  
National Cancer Institute  
Bethesda, Maryland 20892

March 4, 1992

Dr. Harry Pettengill  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health  
Office of Health (EH-40)  
Department of Energy  
Germantown, MD 20874

Dear Harry:

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) notes that since Fiscal Year 1990 there has been no transfer of funds from the Department of Energy (DOE) to NCI in support of the thyroid disease and leukemia studies undertaken at the request of DOE as a part of Task Group 7.2 per the Interagency Agreements (Fiscal Years 1990-1991: DE-A105 90ER61099; Fiscal Year 1992: DE-A105 92EH89188) on "U.S.-Soviet Joint Research on the Biomedical Effects of the Chernobyl Reactor Accident." This appears to be inconsistent with both the spirit and the intent of the Interagency Agreements. During this time, the NCI has continued to exert every effort to pursue the objectives of the Agreement, including an advance of funds to cover associated expenses pending receipt of monies transferred from the DOE. This situation can no longer continue.

Inquiries regarding the need for support of these efforts have been communicated to your staff in recent weeks. The responses have been uniform: that transfer of the funds will be "expedited" upon receipt of copies of the "protocols" given to Kiev and to Minsk in December, 1991. As you are aware, we consider these documents to be draft working papers which are incomplete and will be changed upon receipt of information and comments from the recipients. They are not for distribution, especially beyond the participants and/or their governments.

As you recall during our initial discussions last July, NCI expressed concern and sought reassurances of the long-term commitment by DOE to these efforts so the NCI might plan accordingly with respect to programmatic efforts and personnel support. These assurances were the basis of NCI commitment and cooperation. The NCI, therefore, is concerned that the transfer of funds is not being "expedited" because of a request for documents by DOE, concerning which there exist differing opinions. The fact that differences of opinion may influence DOE funding practices to the point where continued involvement of NCI may be placed in jeopardy is not an encouraging indicator of future working relationships which are expected to extend over many years and involve considerable sums of money.

Following discussions with Dr. Richard H. Adamson, Director, Division of Cancer Etiology, NCI, the following consequences pertain:

1. The NCI will provide to DOE copies of the draft working papers submitted to Minsk and to Kiev. The NCI considers that distribution of these working papers in whole or in

part beyond the parties and governments directly involved would be a breach of confidence; accordingly, if this should occur as a result of DOE actions, the NCI will consider the Interagency Agreement no longer to be in effect.

2. If DOE funds are not available, the following travel for which arrangements have been made and/or invitations received will be reconsidered or cancelled:

March 28 - April 11: Visits to Minsk of a Russian-speaking physician and a Russian-speaking epidemiologist to review medical records and establish criteria for and begin selection of control subjects for a case-control study of thyroid cancer in children.

March 28 - April 11: Visits to Minsk and to Kiev by Drs. Beebe and Wachholz to accompany and introduce above persons, and to discuss scientific plans with counterparts in Minsk for 2 days and in Kiev for 7 days.

March 30 - April 11: Visit to Kiev by 3 technical persons to participate in above discussions in Kiev.

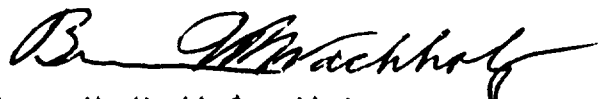
April 10 - 27: One person from Minsk to bring more than 100 thyroid tissue blocks from children with thyroid cancer to the U.S. for processing and analyses.

April 24 - May 7: Drs. Beebe and Wachholz to accompany the DOE delegation to Russia, Minsk and Ukraine.

The NCI expects that these matters will be resolved expeditiously so that this cooperative research program with Belarus and Ukraine may proceed without interruption; it would be most unfortunate if difficulties in our working and political relationships were to occur at this time.

We continue to be available to discuss these matters with you.

Sincerely,



Bruce W. Wachholz, Ph.D.  
Chief, Radiation Effects Branch

cc: Dr. Paul Ziemer, DOE  
Dr. Richard Adamson, NCI  
Dr. Edward Shomaker, NRC